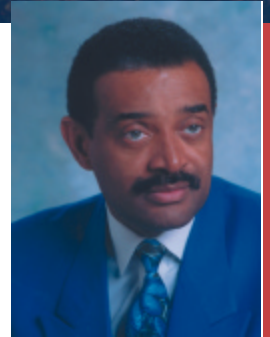
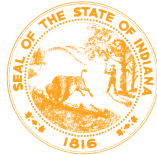


# Dr. Vernon G. Smith

## Indiana State Representative, District 14



Summer, 2001

Dear Friends:

The 2001 long session of the Indiana General Assembly has ended with the passage of a new state budget and several other important pieces of legislation. I am pleased we completed our work on time in a bipartisan manner.

The new two-year state budget includes increased funding for education, CHOICE and other important programs while avoiding a general tax increase. The budget also includes funding for several important local projects that are detailed inside this newsletter.

We passed several other laws that will benefit our state in a variety of areas, including health care, education, crime, election reform and environmental protection. We made improvements to our license branch operations and passed legislation that will protect consumers from annoying telephone calls with the establishment of a do-not-call list. I have described many of these new laws in the next few pages.

In addition, you will find a map of our new legislative district. We are required to redraw the district boundaries every 10 years due to population shifts. I welcome those of you who are new to the district and look forward to working with you in the coming months to make Indiana a better place to live.

Please contact my office if you have additional concerns or questions about state government. You may e-mail me at [H14@ai.org](mailto:H14@ai.org) or call toll-free at 1-800-382-9842.

Sincerely,

**CONTACT**  
REPRESENTATIVE  
SMITH



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# New budget increases school support, local development

Going into the 2001 legislative session, many observers felt that a sluggish economy would make it difficult to enact a biennial state budget without either passing a general tax increase or cutting funding for critical areas like public education. However, the budget bill that became law continues our record of avoiding general tax increases, while providing additional state support to our schools, health care and local projects.

The final version of House Enrolled Act 1001 enables the state to increase support for public schools across Indiana by an average of 3.5 percent each of the next two fiscal years, with minimum guarantees built in to help schools avoid cutting programs and personnel. Funding for higher education was increased by an average of 3.2 percent each year.

## Services and local development

The budget includes additional funding for the CHOICE program that provides in-home care services for the elderly and disabled, as well as Build Indiana Fund support for research and technology, community wastewater and drinking water grants, airport development and improvements to voting systems.

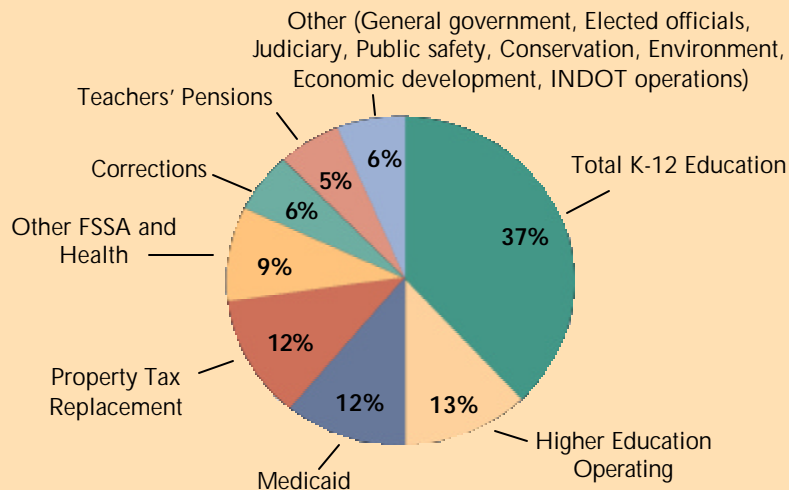
## Tax relief

It was disappointing that we were unable to provide the levels of tax relief that were included in past state budgets, but I am pleased that we were able to extend the life of the homestead credit at 10 percent and maintain the earned income tax credit that assists working families on lower incomes.

Businesses and farms will receive an income tax credit on personal property beginning in 2003, and mobile homes have been changed to be treated as real property with similar deductions. The budget bill continues to fund a statewide property tax relief program that now takes about 16 percent off all property taxes. When coupled with the 10 percent homestead credit, that translates to savings of around 26 percent.

A bill the size of the budget does not contain everything I would like, but with the fiscal restraints facing legislators, I feel this budget is a major accomplishment.

## Spending highlights from the 2001-2003 budget



## Education legislation tops list of Smith accomplishments for session



REP. SMITH DISCUSSES LEGISLATION WITH REP. BEN GIAQUINTA.

During this year's session, several pieces of legislation that I authored and worked on were passed into law.

I authored Public Law 231, which allows local schools to access materials that help provide instruction on resolving conflicts in the classroom. The legislation also provides that a school principal's performance evaluation may not be based wholly on

ISTEP scores of students in the principal's school. They may be used only as one factor in the evaluation.

I also authored Public Law 120, which requires the Superintendent of the Indiana State Police to provide an individual who is receiving a handgun permit with information on handgun safety. The information must take no position on an individual's right to bear arms and must be recommended by a non-profit organization dedicated to providing education on safe handling of firearms. My goal was to make it as easy as possible to provide gun safety information to those applying for carrying permits.

Two bills on which I served as a co-sponsor also became law. Public Law 278 outlines regulations for transporting children in the care of a child care center while Public Law 40 addresses recount issues involving election of precinct committeemen and state delegates.



## Charter schools, kindergarten start date

After several years of debate, legislators finally agreed to pass a bill that will allow charter schools in the state of Indiana. These are independent schools that are able to design their own curriculums and control their own spending without worrying about state authority.

Under Senate Enrolled Act 165, three groups have the ability to sponsor charter schools: local school boards, Indiana's public universities and the mayor of Indianapolis. Those entities will be required to set up their own criteria for establishing the schools,

and advocates are hopeful that sponsors can begin accepting applications from interested parties before the end of this year.

### New kindergarten start date

Children who turn five years of age by July 1 will be able to attend kindergarten classes that fall through a provision included in the state budget. Previously, a child had to be five by June 1.



REP. SMITH DISCUSSES LEGISLATION WITH LT. GOVERNOR JOE KERNAN.

## Build Indiana Funds go to District 14

Since the Hoosier Lottery began in 1989, Lake County has received over \$98 million from the Build Indiana Fund for various local projects. Listed below are the 2001 beneficiaries in House District 14

2001

Brother's Keeper

Town of New Chicago  
Fire Truck

City of Lake Station  
Fire Truck

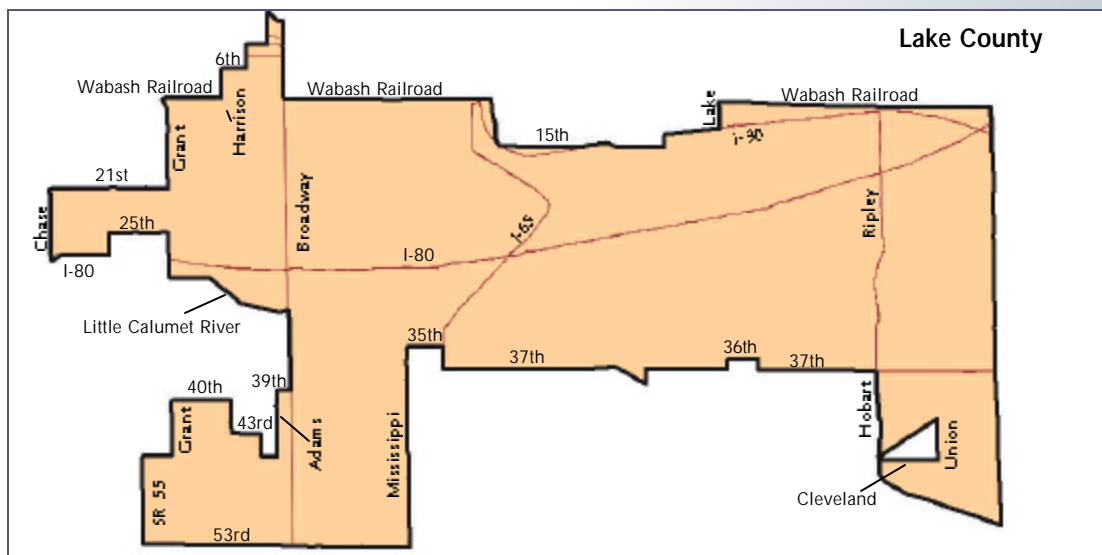
Indiana University  
Northwest  
Project Portal

African American  
Achievers Youth Corp

Civil Rights Hall of Fame  
- Gary

Ivy Tech  
Health Education Center

## The new look of District 14



During this year's session you may have heard about redistricting in the news. After each census, the Indiana General Assembly is required by law to redraw House, Senate and Congressional district boundaries according to population changes.

District boundaries are very complicated, and it took months of effort and plenty of debate among legislators. In the end, however, I feel that the district lines we have drawn are as fair as possible.

For both the current members and those new to the district, I look forward to serving you. Please contact me if you have questions about the district or any other matters.





**Representative Dr. Vernon G. Smith**  
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Representatives

## Health care concerns a legislative priority

**Stay informed about these  
and other issues online with  
Representative Smith**



**Web: [www.in.gov/R14](http://www.in.gov/R14)**

**E-mail: [H14@ai.org](mailto:H14@ai.org)**

In the 2001 legislative session, lawmakers were able to build on the reforms passed in recent years that assured patients have a larger voice in decisions affecting their health care.

Senate Enrolled Act 365 gives patients a chance to appeal care decisions for all accident and sickness insurance coverage to an outside panel of medical professionals. Senate Enrolled Act 310 requires insurers and providers to use easily understandable language to describe procedures and diseases, and Senate Enrolled Act 311 requires insurance companies to pay so-called clean claims — ones that are properly submitted and contain all needed information — in a timely fashion.

Other health care related bills call for providing provider profiles to the general public (HEA 1770), allowing the state to help health care professionals pay their student loans in an effort to keep them in the state (SEA 533) and setting the maximum age for an abandoned infant who may be left in the care of an emergency medical service provider without a court order from 30 to 45 days (HEA 1829).

Disabled Hoosiers will be able to make substantial strides toward achieving self-sufficiency and preserving health care coverage through HEA 1950, which establishes a statewide buy-in program that would assure Medicaid coverage for workers with disabilities.